Directive

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CONNECTING FIELD OFFICES TO THE AMS NETWORK

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I. PURPOSE

This Directive establishes Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) policy and procedures for providing AMS field offices with broadband access to the AMS Wide Area network (WAN), including the use of: 1) Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), Cable, and Satellite connections; 2) USDA Universal Telecommunications Network (UTN) connections; and 3) Frame-relay connections.

II. POLICY

It is AMS policy that the most cost-effective telecommunications service is used whenever possible to connect offices to the WAN. Over the past several years, DSL Cable and Satellite broadband access have become an increasingly viable alternative to dial-up modems and the Agency's frame-relay connections for accessing the WAN. These services are particularly well suited for smaller offices because of their low cost and high bandwidth and should be considered and used in accordance with Agency policy when available. Additionally, USDA has established a UTN to provide a more efficient, secure, reliable, and cost beneficial alternative to existing leased frame-relay connections.

III. DSL, CABLE, OR SATELLITE CONNECTIONS

A. FOR OFFICES WITH FOUR OR FEWER WORKSTATIONS

- 1. Government-Owned or Leased Offices
- **a. Policy:** AMS Programs may use DSL, cable, or satellite Broadband services for Government-owned or leased offices that have a total of four or fewer workstations or other network-addressable devices at the office to connect to the WAN. These offices will use the broadband modem and the four-port router issued by the DSL, cable, or satellite company for access to the Internet. Offices with more than four devices will not be able to use this service because of the four-port limitation. All workstations in these offices are required to use the current Agency standard version of the Cisco Virtual Permanent Network (VPN) client to

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securely access the Agency's network. Workstations shall be configured to automatically establish a VPN connection with the Agency WAN upon workstation boot up, routers <u>must</u> use network cables to connect to the router, and the router's wireless function <u>must</u> be disabled.

- **b. Technical Support:** Technical support for offices using DSL, cable, or satellite company routers is the responsibility of the DSL, cable, or satellite provider and the Program's system administrator. Requests for technical support regarding the Cisco VPN client shall be directed first to the Program area's system administrator and then to the Information Technology Group (ITG) Technical Resources Branch (TRB) as necessary.
- **c.** Cost of Services: Financial and contractual obligations for services provided by the DSL, cable, or satellite company are the responsibility of the Program or Programs serviced by that site.
- **d.** Technical Approval and Ordering: The Agency Telecommunications Mission Area Control Officer (TMACO), the agent responsible for procuring telecommunications services for the Agency, is delegating procurement authority to the head of the Program administrative office for the acquisition of DSL, cable, or satellite services for AMS offices that are Government-owned or leased and have four or fewer workstations to be connected to the WAN, provided that all service bills are paid using a Program accounting number through the Agency's standard telecommunications payment system. This procurement authority may not be re-delegated by the head of the Program administrative office.

2. Residences Used as the Official Duty Station

a. Policy: When a residence is the official duty station for an employee, DSL, cable, or satellite connections may be established at Government expense when the AMS Program considers its use to be advantageous for the performance of business. Programs shall first consider whether the Web Outlook Access or the use of a mobile laptop data connection would be more appropriate. If not, the cost of using the DSL, cable, or satellite service for official business, including installation, shall be paid for by the Government, either by establishing the account so that the full cost is paid directly by the Government, or by reimbursing the employee when the line is established under the name of the employee. In the latter case, if the employee wishes to use the service for more than incidental personal use, the cost shall be fairly prorated between the employee and the Government based on the estimated time of personal and business use.

These home offices will use the broadband modem and the four-port router issued by the DSL, cable, or satellite company for access to the Internet. A Government-owned and managed workstation and the Agency's current standard version of the Cisco Virtual Permanent Network (VPN) client must be used by the employee to connect to the AMS network.

When a residence is not the official duty station for an employee, employees are typically provided with a high bandwidth connection to the AMS network at their office when required for the performance of duty. In these cases, employees may not be reimbursed for the business use of DSL, cable, or satellite connections at their residence when such use is occasional or a matter of employee preference such as participation under the telework program.

- **b. Technical Support:** Technical support for offices using DSL, cable, or satellite company routers is the responsibility of the DSL, cable, or satellite provider and the Program's system administrator. Requests for technical support regarding the Cisco VPN client shall be directed first to the Program area's system administrator and then to the ITG Technical Resources Branch as necessary.
- **c.** Cost of Services: Financial and contractual obligations for the business use of services provided by the DSL, cable, or satellite company are the responsibility of the Program or Programs serviced by that site.
- **d.** Technical Approval and Ordering: The Agency Telecommunications Mission Area Control Officer (TMACO) is delegating procurement authority to the head of the Program administrative office for the acquisition of DSL, cable, or satellite services for AMS offices that are official duty stations and need to be connected to the WAN, provided that all service bills are paid using a Program accounting number through the Agency's standard telecommunications payment system or an appropriate reimbursement is made to the employee for business use of a personally-provided service. This procurement authority may not be redelegated by the head of the Program administrative office.

B. FOR OFFICES WITH FIVE OR MORE WORKSTATIONS

- 1. Policy: Program Areas are allowed to research the availability of DSL, cable, or satellite Broadband services for offices with five or more workstations or other network-addressable devices. These offices will be permanently connected to the Agency's network. These offices shall use an Agency-installed, 16-port Cisco Router in conjunction with the broadband modem issued by the DSL, cable, or satellite company. The Agency router will create a permanent site-to-site VPN tunnel across the Internet that will connect that office to the Agency's network. Client workstations within this type of office will not need to use the Cisco VPN client on individual workstations for network connectivity.
- **2. Technical Support:** Technical support for offices using Agency-installed routers is the responsibility of the Agency ITG Infrastructure Management Branch (IMB). Requests for technical support shall be directed first to the Program's system administrator and then to the ITG Technical Resources Branch for trouble ticket creation and referral to IMB.
- **3. Cost of Services:** When the account is established, the TMACO will work with business managers to determine the appropriate Agency Program accounting code(s) to charge for the cost of the service. DSL, cable, or satellite costs must be compared to an equivalent UTN or frame-relay circuit of the same bandwidth to make an informed decision about cost savings opportunities.
- **4. Technical Approval and Ordering:** Because the TMACO is charged with the responsibility of procuring telecommunications services for the Agency, all orders for DSL or Cable Broadband services shall be submitted to, approved by, and ordered by the TMACO.

IV. USDA UTN CONNECTIONS

- **A. Policy:** USDA has established a Universal Telecommunications Network (UTN) to provide an efficient, secure, reliable, and cost beneficial alternative to current frame-relay connections. AMS will work with the Department to compare frame-relay costs of current circuits against UTN connections in order to assess the feasibility of moving frame-relay circuits onto the UTN.
- **B. Technical Support:** Offices connected to the UTN will use Agency-installed and maintained routers. Technical support for offices connected to the UTN is the responsibility of the Agency ITG IMB. Requests for technical support shall be directed first to the ITG TRB for trouble ticket creation and referral to IMB.
- **C. Cost of Services:** When the account is established, the TMACO will work with business managers to determine the appropriate Agency Program accounting code(s) to charge for the cost of the service. UTN costs must be compared to an equivalent frame-relay circuit and DSL, cable, satellite company circuit of the same bandwidth, if available, to make an informed decision about cost savings opportunities.
- **D. Technical Approval and Ordering:** Because the TMACO is charged with the responsibility of procuring telecommunications services for the Agency, all orders for UTN services shall be submitted to, approved by, and ordered by the TMACO.

V. FRAME-RELAY CONNECTIONS

- **A. Policy:** Many Agency field offices are located in rural areas where broadband access via frame-relay is the only or most cost effective and reliable means of establishing telecommunication services. In these locations, AMS will utilize frame-relay services through current Departmental or Federal telecommunications contract vehicles (i.e., FTS2001, Networx).
- **B. Technical Support:** Offices connected to the WAN via frame-relay will use Agency-installed and maintained routers. Technical support for offices connected via frame-relay is the responsibility of the Agency ITG IMB. Requests for technical support shall be directed first to the ITG TRB for trouble ticket creation and referral to IMB.
- **C. Cost of Services:** When the account is established, the TMACO will work with business managers to determine the appropriate Agency Program accounting code(s) to charge for the cost of the service. Frame-relay circuit costs must be compared to an equivalent UTN circuit and DSL, cable, satellite company circuit of the same bandwidth, if available, to make an informed decision about cost savings opportunities.
- **D. Technical Approval and Ordering:** Because the TMACO is charged with the responsibility of procuring telecommunications services for the Agency, all orders for frame-relay services shall be submitted to, approved by, and ordered by the TMACO.

/s/

Lloyd C. Day Administrator